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TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR CLASS.

My Friends and Pupils:

The time is now drawing nigh, when your immediate connexion with the college is to cease, and you will have reached one of those stages in the journey of life, at which the mind naturally pauses to contemplate the progress which it has made, and prepare itself for proceeding onward to the appointed end of its career. And while you are about to leave the place of your education, and enter into the world to apply the knowledge, and prove the principles, which you have here acquired, they, who have so long watched over the growth of your moral and intellectual characters, are to

yield up their important charge. Such an occasion seems to call on your instructers, at least on him whose intercourse with you the duties of his station have rendered more immediate, for something beside the compliments of an ordinary farewell. Influenced by this opinion, desiring, also, to express my sense of your deportment towards me both personally and officially, and wishing still more to testify my interest in your future welfare, I have addressed this communication to you as individuals and as a class. I hope you will believe me when I say that, were my age sufficient to justify me in assuming a different tone, I have no disposition to speak to you otherwise than as a friend; and I doubt not you will approve my using the privileged freedom of a friend, in whatever observations the present occasion may dictate.

Although your residence here as members of the college is shortly to be at an end, I am persuaded that your regard for this institution, for

its revered head, and for those who superintended your education in it, will ever continue unabated. The college has grown up under the patronage of pious and learned men, by whom it was dedicated to the cause of liberal knowledge in our country; and the success, which has attended their endeavors, needs no ampler illustration than it derives from the character of the eminent philosophers, statesmen and divines, who spent their youth in literary pursuits at Cambridge. As you must feel ambitious to carry on the series of her distinguished sons, so there is no doubt that you will vie with them in manifesting affection for this your Alma Mater. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that, in defending her interests, you are defending the interests of science and religion; and in resisting those, who blame her without cause, you will be sustained by remembering the advantages, which you yourselves have received from her fostering care, and point to

your own proficiency in evidence of her usefulness.

There is so much that awakens vivid interest, so much to excite and keep alive the social feelings in a college-life, that I believe you will always look upon the time, which you have passed here, as one of more than ordinary happiness. Hereafter, when the responsible cares and anxieties of the world shall have occupied your thoughts, the recollection of those gay, unconcerned moments of youth, which are now leaving you, will be doubly grateful. We pass through college at an age, when the pleasures of life are enjoyed with the keenest relish. We mingle in the inspiriting concourse of our fellows, who are engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, striving with us in the acquisition of knowledge, enlivening us by their applause and calling forth all our powers by their emulation of our success. The world around us can exhibit no parallel for this animating

spectacle. Manhood, when it comes, will bring with it objects of eager pursuit for us all; but the open vivacity of youthful contention will be fled. Ambition will then shew itself to us with more of selfishness, and less of redeeming, graceful ingenuousness of competition. I cannot, therefore, but regard a public education, in spite of the temptation, which it throws in the way of weakness, and the premature development of the faculties, which it is apt to produce,—I cannot but regard it as of the first utility, in filling the mind with manly principles of honorable rivalry to fit us for the conflicts of life. And even if a public education did not possess this tendency to instil generous feelings of emulation, it would deserve to be looked upon with favor, were it merely on account of the opportunity, which it affords, for a free interchange of ideas and sentiments in early youth, and for contracting friendships before the heart, to use the language of the most eloquent

forensic orator of modern times, is deadened or perverted by the interests and corruptions of the world. Every day that you live, and wherever you chance to be, you will perpetually have cause to congratulate yourselves on the lasting attachments, which four years of intimate and confiding association at college will have gained for you, among those, too, who have a right to hope that they shall one day stand highest in the estimation of their countrymen.

The restraints attending a residence in college I presume you now consider to be not only inseparable from the nature of such an institution, but also highly salutary in promoting the best ends of education. When you find that you have acquired habits of diligence, of order, of systematic exertion, of facility in obtaining knowledge,—you will not regret the restraint by means of which those habits were purchased. The advantage of pursuing our studies in

a public seminary consists not in reading certain books, but in reading them methodically, with instructers to give unity and plan to the whole course of studies, together with the stimulus of public distinction to produce competition. Nor is this an advantage of trifling importance. Undoubtedly we might learn as many facts in a private as in a public education; but we should learn them in a discursive and desultory manner, if a regular system of study were not marked out for us, and we should learn them loosely if there were nothing to excite us in applying all the force of our minds to the subject of inquiry. The beneficial effect of such an education is more readily felt than it is appreciated, because it is not easy for us to measure an improvement of our own faculties with exactness; yet none of you, I think, can have failed to perceive his memory strengthened and his judgment matured and disciplined by the method of study here

adopted, even in cases where that method did not happen to be wholly suited to your individual tastes.

And you will soon be where the proficiency, which you have made, must undergo the ordeal of public opinion. The service of your country will shortly require the exercise of every talent, which nature gave you or education has imparted. Your eloquence is to be employed in pleading for the cause of public order and national rectitude, your learning is to be put in requisition to uphold the dominion of equal laws, your skill to alleviate the pains of sickness, your piety, intelligence, virtue, your whole soul is to be dedicated to the spreading abroad of true religion and the advancement of the triumphs of the cross. These are duties not to be lightly adventured upon or inconsiderately attempted in the reckless gaiety of youthful enterprise, but rather exacting all the powers of understanding, which you can summon togeth-

er you shall not rather sail over its waters in the security and pride of conscious mastery over the wind and the wave. Difficulties will assuredly perplex your progress in life, but it rests with you to be able to unravel them if you please, and extricate yourselves from their toils. Dangers may assail you, but on prudence and integrity you can always rely as a panoply of proof. And, at the close of a life well-spent, you can reflect on it as the fruit of your own desert, that, with the blessing of Providence, you have attained the rewards, which a free country is ever prompt to bestow on exalted merit.

Any particular observations upon your future studies could not but appear misplaced among the cursory suggestions, which alone it has been my present design to make. I will merely advert to one thing in this relation, which, from its superior importance, and from the undue neglect which it suffers in the prevailing systems of education, it may be well to speak of

in this communication, namely, popular eloquence. I do not call your attention to this faculty as an instrument of acquiring wealth independent of the perils of the sea and the vicissitudes of the seasons. Nor do I mention it as assuring to its possessor whatever supremacy of political influence or power the most importunate ambition would crave. But I would notice it here as the mightiest agent, which God has bestowed on us, for effecting moral purposes, and in this view recommend to you the persevering and assiduous cultivation of it, as you wish to become fitted to diffuse knowledge, virtue, and religion among men. For the authority, which the good and enlightened are capable of gaining over the bad by the force of eloquence exercised in the turbulent and angry moments of public corruption, is the firmest safeguard of our national integrity. This, amid all the abuses and disorders, to which a popular government is subject, amid the dan-

er, for your guide and furtherance in carrying you through the task, to which, by your education and rank, you are imperatively called. For the die is now to be cast, upon which all your prosperity and usefulness through life depend. When you have embraced that course of exertion, which your temper of mind points out to you as the proper vocation for which you were destined, it is to be determined whether the cost and labor of your education have been like seed scattered upon the barren sands, which rain will not refresh, nor the sun fertilize ;—or whether your manhood shall put forth the vigorous production of a generous soil for the shelter and support of those, who have been less highly favored by heaven than yourselves with the means of improvement.

Whatever profession you may severally choose, it will be your happiness to know, and contribute to prove, that, in this country at least, every man is the artificer of his own

good or ill fortune, since neither can any one appeal to the possession of rank as a substitute for personal worth, nor to the absence of it as impeding him in the pursuit of honor. Should any want of prosperity be our lot in the plans of future usefulness, which we may have formed, we ought to reproach ourselves alone for the failure, saying, with the patriotic Roman,

> Men at some time are masters of their fates;
> The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
> But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

If you needed any thing to quicken your activity, you would only have to consider that any weakness or vice, of which you may be guilty, can no more escape detection and censure, than your merit can fail to be duly appreciated and amply rewarded. The world is before you, and you are to say what shall be your place in it, whether high or low; for you can decide whether fortune shall be in your hands or you in hers,—whether you shall be driven onward upon the tide of time unheeded and unheeding, or wheth-

and, as they pass him, pointing the moving finger of scorn at the weak victim of sensual indulgence. And should we lay open the heart of him, whose external condition we have thus followed, we should find there the anguish of a broken spirit and the stings of a remorseful conscience, the worm that never dies knawing at his heart, calamity and despair crushing him with their accumulated load, and pressing him down into an untimely grave, which to him is but the beginning of sorrows. And with all this continually before us; knowing, as we do, that, could we shut our eyes upon the retribution which must overtake us in the world to come, still we shall have judgment here, and that

> even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
> To our own lips;—

must we not conclude that happiness,—not the feverish tumult of temporary gratification, but the fixed and permanent happiness, which alone

is worth hoping or living for,—can never be ministered to by vice?

I have no wish to advocate monastic austerity of manners, nor to say that which might imply censure of any person for falling short of unattainable faultlessness of conduct. But it is of the greatest importance to begin life with a conviction that, by choosing to follow the dictates of sense and appetite rather than of virtue and reason, we do but defeat our own purpose, condemning ourselves to eventual wretchedness. And however little, in the elation of youthful vivacity, we may be disposed to heed the voice of religion, still, if we believe what the aged tell us, if we trust in them, who, having tried life, have a right to speak of it with the certainty of experimental knowledge,—we must feel that religion has paramount claims upon our regard, not only in the sunset of our days, but in their morning likewise, as affording consolation, and support, and

gers of a spirit of insubordination and independence, amid the overflowings of an exuberant freedom, this authority is an atoning and redeeming circumstance, which will uphold, direct, and dignify our political institutions beyond the ordinary period for which republics endure, and which, although it may finally, when misapplied and perverted by the falsely ambitious, prove our ruin and overthrow, will for a long time continue to be the palladium of our civil privileges at home and the source of increasing glory in every quarter of the civilized world. Such an authority it is for you to seek and employ in the noblest manner.

The common end and aim of all our pursuits in life is happiness, however different may be the paths which we select, to lead us to the same object. And therefore it is most important that we should strongly feel, at the outset, that our temporal interests, as well as religious hopes, are inseparably connected with integrity

of purpose and irreproachable conduct. We cannot cast our eyes, for a single moment, even upon the mere outside of society, without meeting with incontestable evidence of the fact. We see in the sickly frame and tottering step of the vicious, that infirmity, premature old age, and death before the usual termination of man's brief career upon earth, are the settled and decreed curse of those, whom moral principles were too feeble to withhold from sinning. If we examine the deluded votary of pleasure more narrowly, we perceive the respect of his fellows gradually dropping away from him, as, one after another, they rise up and he descends in the fluctuating mass of society; we see those alone who are degraded like himself continuing to consort with him, as they sink downward in public estimation together: and at last we find him left behind in the race by those who originally started at his side, while the very children of his first companions are outstripping him,

assistance, where every thing beside is vain and powerless.

It is the more desirable that you should be such as your best friends would rejoice to see you, because the evil effects of your being otherwise will not stop with yourselves, but be propagated from you to the community. You cannot withdraw yourselves into harmless obscurity. Your education does not permit you to be insignificant. Either you must be lights to cheer and guide, or else to mislead and injure those, who look up to you as their example.

But I feel that I am saying that, which, to you, will seem uncalled for and superfluous; and therefore I hasten to close these remarks with a word or two concerning our personal connexion. The task of an instructer in this institution, you need not be informed, is peculiarly delicate. It is incumbent on him to exercise all that severity, which the due preservation of order

sometimes unhappily demands, while it is no less incumbent on him so to blend and attemper a rigorous regard to justice with mildness of conduct, that his pupils may perceive him to be actuated exclusively by a desire to promote their final and greatest good. You will readily conceive how difficult it is for any one to succeed in exactly attaining this happy medium, and in adhering to it uniformly, amid all the unexpected incidents, by which his thoughts are constantly liable to be distracted. Whenever, therefore, I may have erred in administering the discipline or instruction of the college, I trust you have been so candid as to impute it to the difficulties inseparable from my situation. If there be any one among you, who feels himself aggrieved at my hands, I can assure him, with perfect sincerity, that the injury was my misfortune rather than my fault. And my reliance on your candor in this respect is the more confident, because I can freely affirm that there is not that

individual in your number, against whom I entertain, or believe that I have cause to entertain, the slightest ill-will. I esteem it my greatest happiness, that never, to my knowledge, have you demeaned yourselves toward me in any wise unworthy of gentlemen or scholars; and I shall retain a grateful sense of it to the latest hour of my life.

These explanations I have thought due to you and to myself; because preparing, as we are, to separate, and each take his own distinct course, I never may have a like opportunity of declaring my sentiments to the class. But wherever our various fortunes may carry us in time to come, be assured that I, at least, shall account the day a happy one, which enables us to meet again, and look back together upon our past connexion. If I fail of enjoying that pleasure, still I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that you prosper; since hereafter you must assume such a rank in society, that neith-

er yourselves nor your characters can be concealed from public notice and applause. That you may each severally attain the highest object of your ambition; that you may prove an honor to the place in which you have been educated, and an ornament to your country; that you may never cease to enjoy that happiness which you are entitled to expect; and that, when you go down to the grave, the respect of all good men may attend your memory, is the most ardent wish of

your sincere friend

and affectionate tutor,

C. Cushing

Cambridge, July 13th 1821